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ABSTRACT

During March 1974, a telephone survey to determine television viewing patterns was conducted in a four-county area surrounding Nashville, Tennessee. Data were gathered concerning family characteristics and time spent watching WDCN, Nashville's public broadcasting station. Results characterized viewers according to total time spent watching television, types of program watched, sex, age, race, educational attainment, and family structure. Details of the survey design and tabular results are included. (EMH)

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THE AUDIENCE OF WDCN-TV

NASHVILLE, TENN.

Prepared by the Office of Communication Research
Corporation for Public Broadcasting
Washington, D.C.

December 3, 1974

IR 003 137

INTRODUCTION

The information presented here was gathered by telephone interviews with a sample of households in Davidson, Giles, Montgomery, and Rutherford Counties in March 1974. Shockley Research of Nashville designed the sample and supervised the data collection using an interview form developed by the Communication Research staff of CPB in consultation with members of the WDCN staff. The study was part of the CPB/Ford Public Broadcasting Research Facility project.

Davidson, Montgomery, and Rutherford Counties are all in WDCN's grade A signal area. The samples for each county were found to be sufficiently similar on basic demographic variables to warrant combining them (with weighting for disproportionate sample sizes) for the purposes of analysis as representative of the grade A signal area population. It should be kept in mind, however, that unique characteristics may exist among the population in other counties within the signal area and thus are not represented here.

Giles County is on the periphery of the WDCN grade B signal area and was included in the study to provide insights concerning the use of WDCN by residents of the lightly populated rural counties in middle Tennessee.

VIEWING OF WDCN

36% OF THOSE INTERVIEWED COULD NAME A WDCN PROGRAM THAT SOMEONE IN THE HOME HAD WATCHED DURING THE PRECEDING WEEK.

These respondents and their families constitute "WDCN Viewers" in the analysis that follows.

Several things should be noted about the definition of "WDCN Viewers." It excludes persons who view the station only on an occasional basis but who, indeed, may feel a loyalty to the station. By its time bounds of "viewing during the preceding week," this definition tends to establish a group corresponding to a "weekly cume" as defined in commercial measurements such as that of the A. C. Nielsen Co. However, since it is based on recall, the figure may be inflated by people who confuse the time frame or falsely name programs; it may be deflated by persons who did watch but cannot recall the name of the program.

Comparison with concurrent Nielsen estimates for the Nashville market suggests that this definition may overstate the actual number who viewed during the preceding week. But experience with other past studies suggests that it also may underestimate the number of persons who consider themselves viewers of the station. It does provide a reasonably solid core of households containing persons who do view the station regularly.

ANOTHER 13% SAID THAT SOMEONE HAD WATCHED WDCN DURING THE PRECEDING WEEK, BUT THEY COULD NOT NAME THE PROGRAM.

10% SAID THAT THE ADULTS IN THE HOUSEHOLD WERE "REGULAR VIEWING FANS" OF WDCN.

51% OF THE RESPONDENTS IN HOMES CONTAINING PRE-SCHOOL OR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN SAID THAT THE CHILDREN WERE "REGULAR VIEWING FANS" OF WDCN.

TV USE AMONG WDCN VIEWERS
COMPARED TO THAT OF NON-VIEWERS OF WDCN

	WDCN viewers	WDCN non-viewers
HOMES IN WHICH THE TV SET IS SAID TO BE TURNED ON "ALL DAY"	38%	29%
Additional homes reporting the set TURNED ON AT LEAST SIX HOURS A DAY	19%	17%
HOMES IN WHICH VIEWING TIME IS SAID TO BE THE SAME FROM NIGHT TO NIGHT	56%	60%
HOMES REPORTING VIEWING AT LEAST FIVE HOURS ON WEEK NIGHTS	36%	37%
HOMES REPORTING VIEWING AT LEAST FOUR HOURS ON WEEK NIGHTS	60%	57%
HOMES CONTAINING TWO OR MORE TV SETS	63%	52%
HOMES CONTAINING A COLOR TV SET	74%	63%
HOMES HAVING AN OUTDOOR ANTENNA	45%	43%
HOMES HAVING A ROTOR OUTDOOR ANTENNA (included in the above figure)	6%	4%

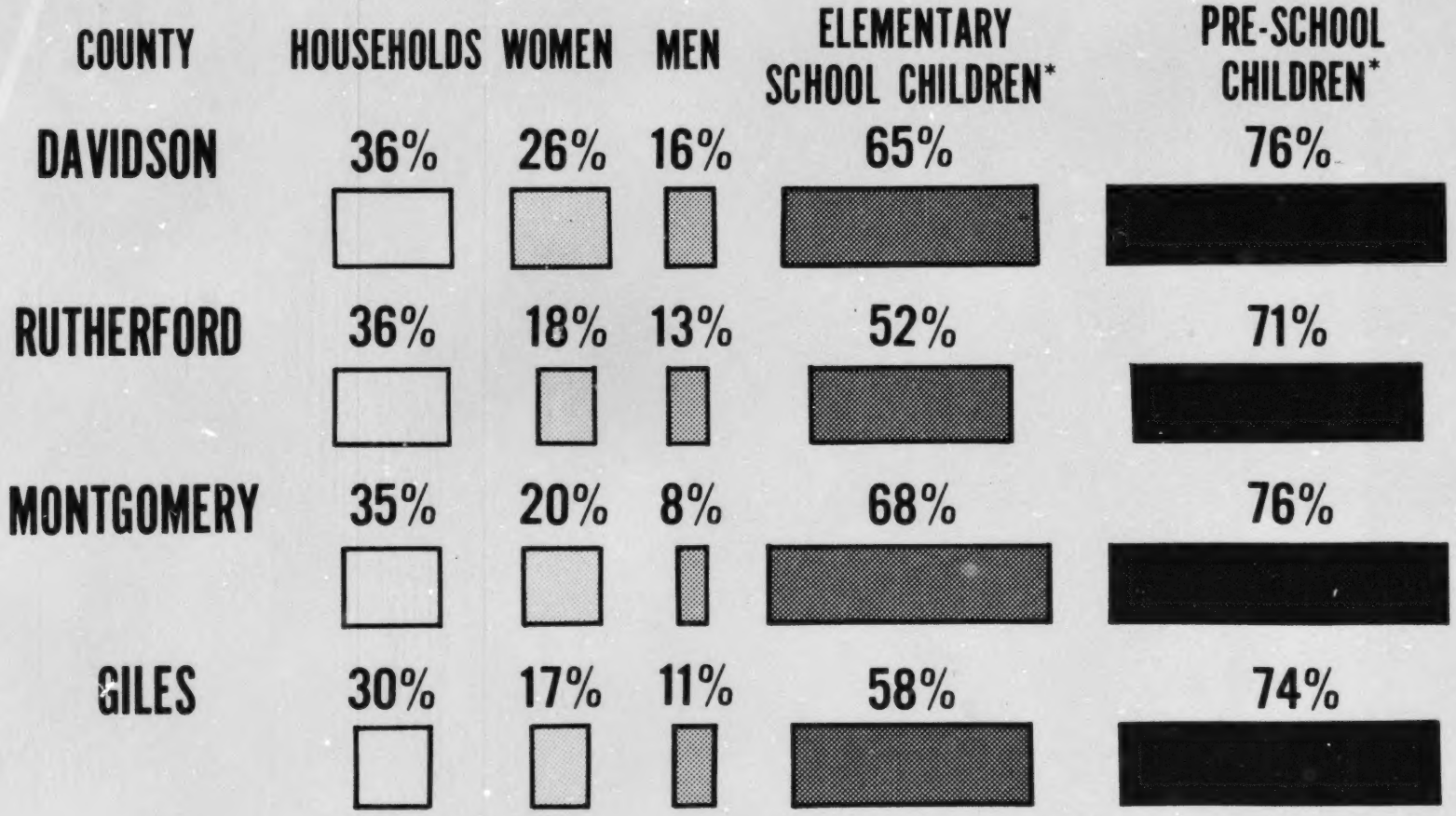
(More)

TV USE AMONG WDCN-VIEWERS
COMPARED TO THAT OF NON-VIEWERS OF WDCN
(concluded)

	WDCN viewers	WDCN non-viewers
HOUSEHOLDS IN WHICH DAYTIME VIEWING IS REPORTED BY:		
FEMALE ADULT	64%	59%
MALE ADULT	10%	19%
PRE-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN*	80%	37%
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN*	48%	36%
HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING THAT TV PROGRAMS ARE SELECTED BY:		
HABIT	36%	46%
TV MAGAZINE	24%	16%
SUNDAY PAPER	20%	14%
DAILY PAPER	15%	16%
FLIPPING CHANNELS	6%	7%

*Percentages based on number of homes containing children in this age group.

WHO VIEWS WDCN IN HOUSEHOLD



*PERCENT BASED ON HOUSEHOLDS CONTAINING CHILDREN OF THIS AGE GROUP

WHO VIEWS WDCN IN THE HOUSEHOLD?

Studies in other cities have shown that not all of the members of a public television household watch programs on the station. The same is true for WDCN's audience. As with other public stations, WDCN's major strength is among the young children, as can be seen in the accompanying figure.

However in the matter of who in the family views, we do see differences in the samples from the several counties.

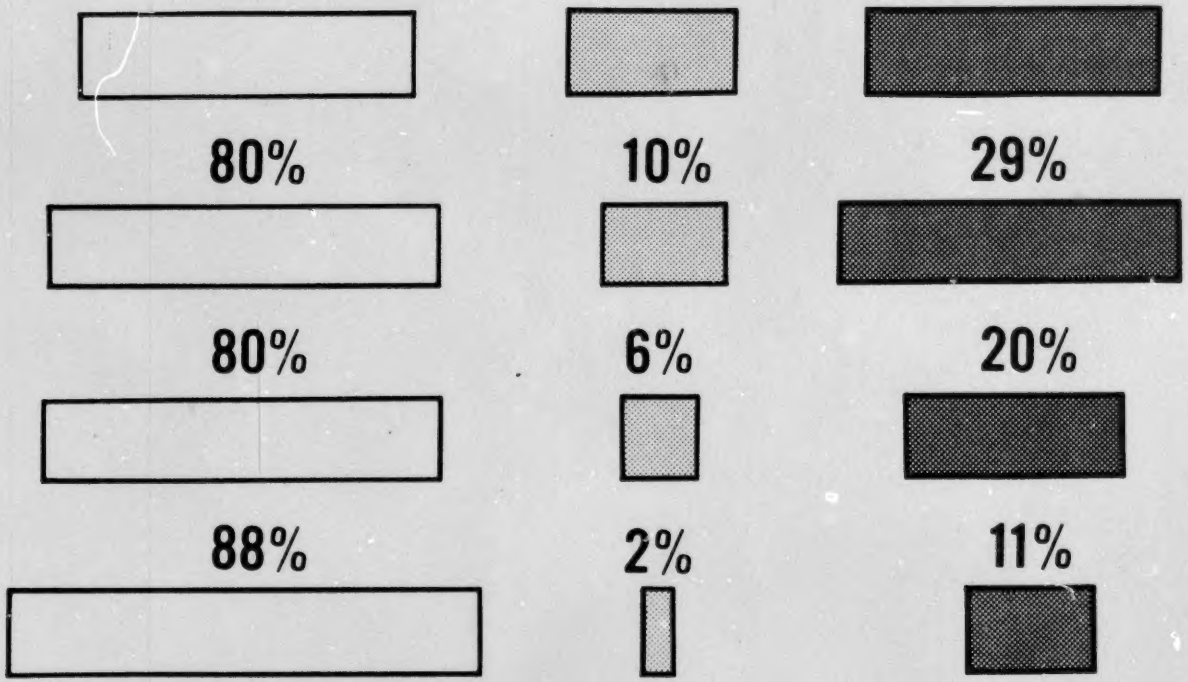
A look at the figure shows that the percent of households reporting viewing of WDCN does not fluctuate for all practical purposes in Davidson, Rutherford, and Montgomery Counties. And even in outlying Giles County the WDCN audience in terms of households is 30%, compared to the 35% and 36% in the more central counties.

When we look at who in the household is reported to view, we see that it is the pre-school age children who account for the relative stability in the audience size from one county to the next. Some sizeable variation does appear among households with elementary school children, but still over half these homes in all four counties are in the WDCN audience.

WDCN's reach among adults is much more restricted, even more so among men than among women. Further, the attrition of audience as one moves from Davidson County to the outlying counties is particularly critical.

TYPES OF PROGRAMS VIEWED

COUNTY	CHILDREN'S	PUBLIC AFFAIRS	ART
DAVIDSON	74%	18%	24%
RUTHERFORD	80%	10%	29%
MONTGOMERY	80%	6%	20%
GILES	88%	2%	11%



(CATEGORIES ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE SINCE MANY RESPONDENTS NAMED MORE THAN ONE PROGRAM.)

TYPES OF WDCN PROGRAMS VIEWED

The relatively lower levels of WDCN viewing among residents of counties beyond Davidson County is further reflected in the types of WDCN programs that viewers in each county reported seeing during the previous week.

The popular PBS children's programs account for the overwhelming majority of program mentions in all four counties. However, the proportion of viewers naming children's programs increases from 74% to 80% in Davidson, Rutherford, and Montgomery Counties to almost nine out of ten--88%--in Giles County.

Analysis of the national audience of Public Television and studies in many other individual markets have shown that Arts programs draw more viewers than do Public Affairs programs. This is true in the WDCN market as well. But notice that in Davidson County the lead of the Arts category is relatively small compared to that in the outlying counties. Public Affairs programs suffer considerably more attrition in these outlying counties than do the programs falling in the Arts category.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The figures which follow present an analysis of WDCN's audience in terms of standard demographic characteristics: Age, Education (which correlates strongly with income and occupation and provides an indicator of socio-economic status position), Race, and the Presence of Young Children in the Household.

The figures at first may look complicated and confusing, so a word of explanation at this point may help the reader extract the message they tell.

There are two ways of looking at demographic characteristics. In one instance, we may wish to think in terms of the profile of a station's audience (and the non-audience). Such a profile gives estimates of how many of the viewers fall into each group. For instance, an age profile of the WDCN audience tells us how many of its viewing households are headed by persons in the different age groups. Such profiles give us an idea of the composition of the audience with regard to the several demographic characteristics.

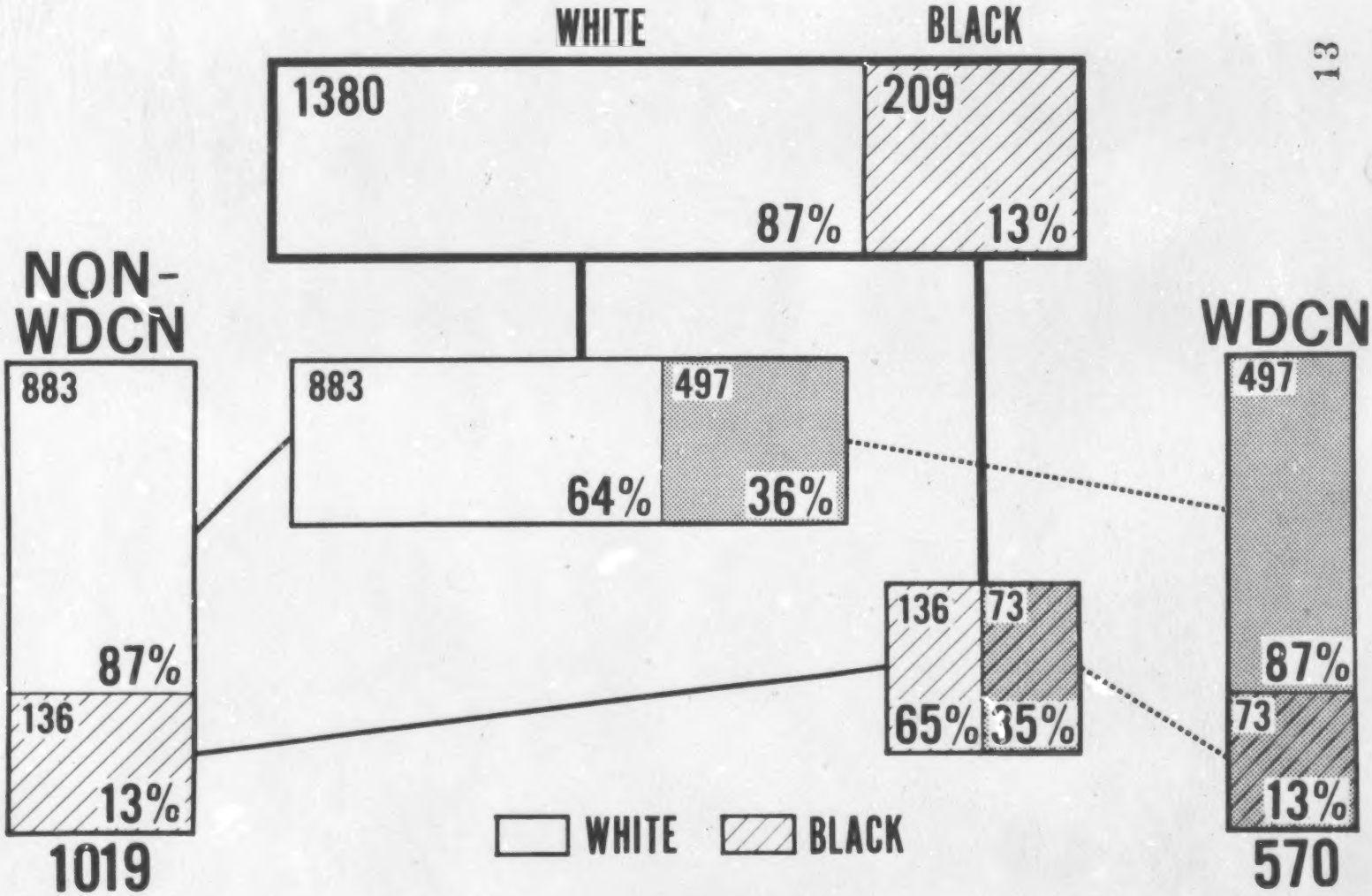
But it is also useful to obtain an idea of the station's relative success in attracting viewers from each group. For instance, we may wish to know if the station is more successful among young households or older households; does it attract a larger percentage of the white families than of the black families?

In the figures that follow, the profile of the total sample in Davidson, Montgomery, and Rutherford Counties is shown in the bar at the top. Each of the demographic groups in that profile is then individually presented in the center of the page to show how many of them do view WDCN and how many do not. The viewers and non-viewers

from each of these groups are then put together to provide a profile for the WDCN audience and its non-audience. Thus, in the bar on the right we have the WDCN profile and in the bar on the left we have the profile of the non-audience group.

RACE

TOTAL SAMPLE
N=1589

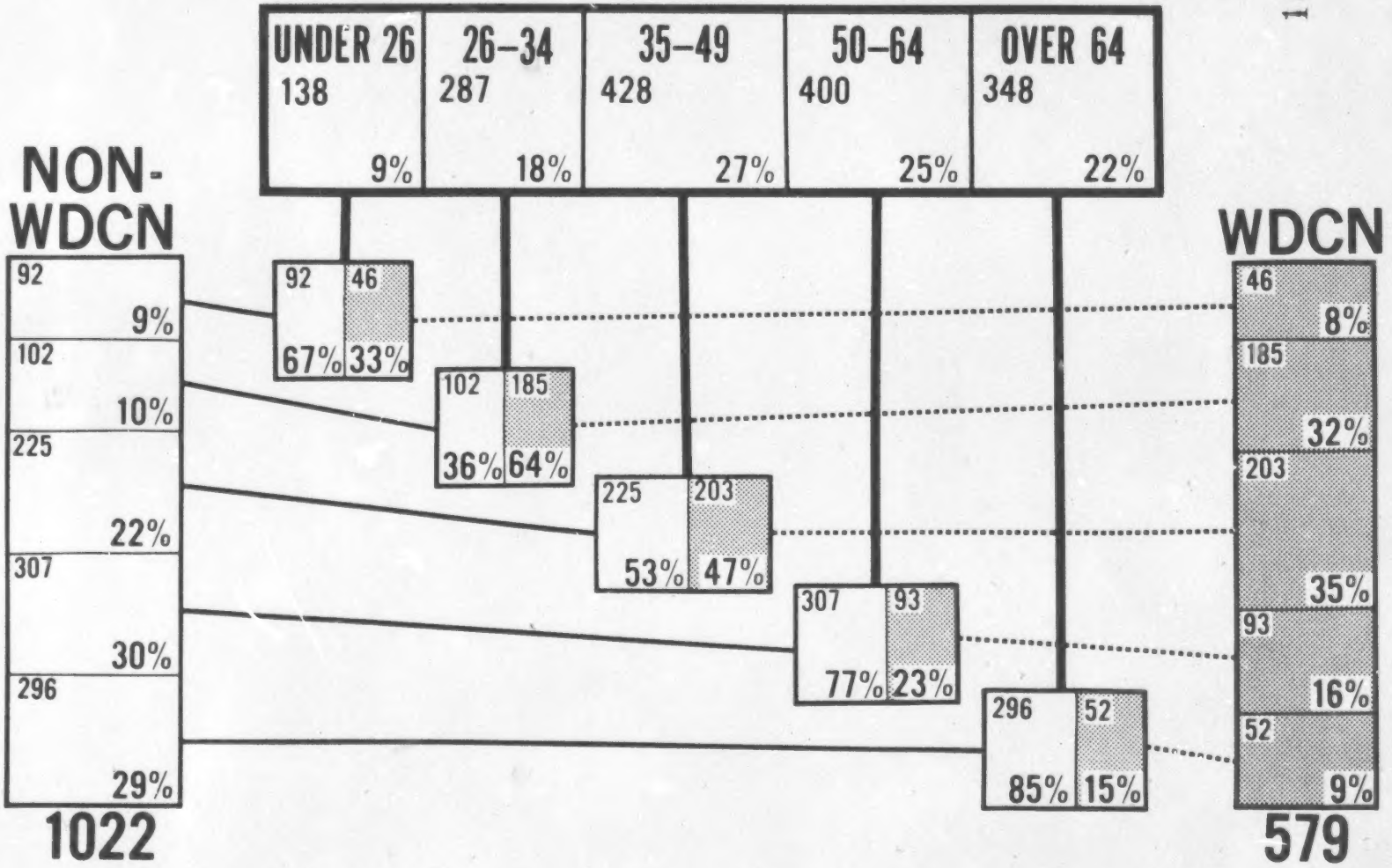


ETHNIC PROFILE

The accompanying figure shows that in terms of its total reach among households in its signal area, WDCN does equally as well among black households as among white households.

AGE

TOTAL SAMPLE
N=1601



AGE PROFILE

WDCN's reach among households headed by young adults, those 25 or under, is proportionate to its reach in the total population--33%. The station achieves its greatest reach among those households where the head is in the 26-34 age group. Two-thirds of such homes qualify as WDCN viewers. In each of the older age groups, we see a decline in the proportion who view WDCN, with the most precipitous fall occurring among those 50 or over.

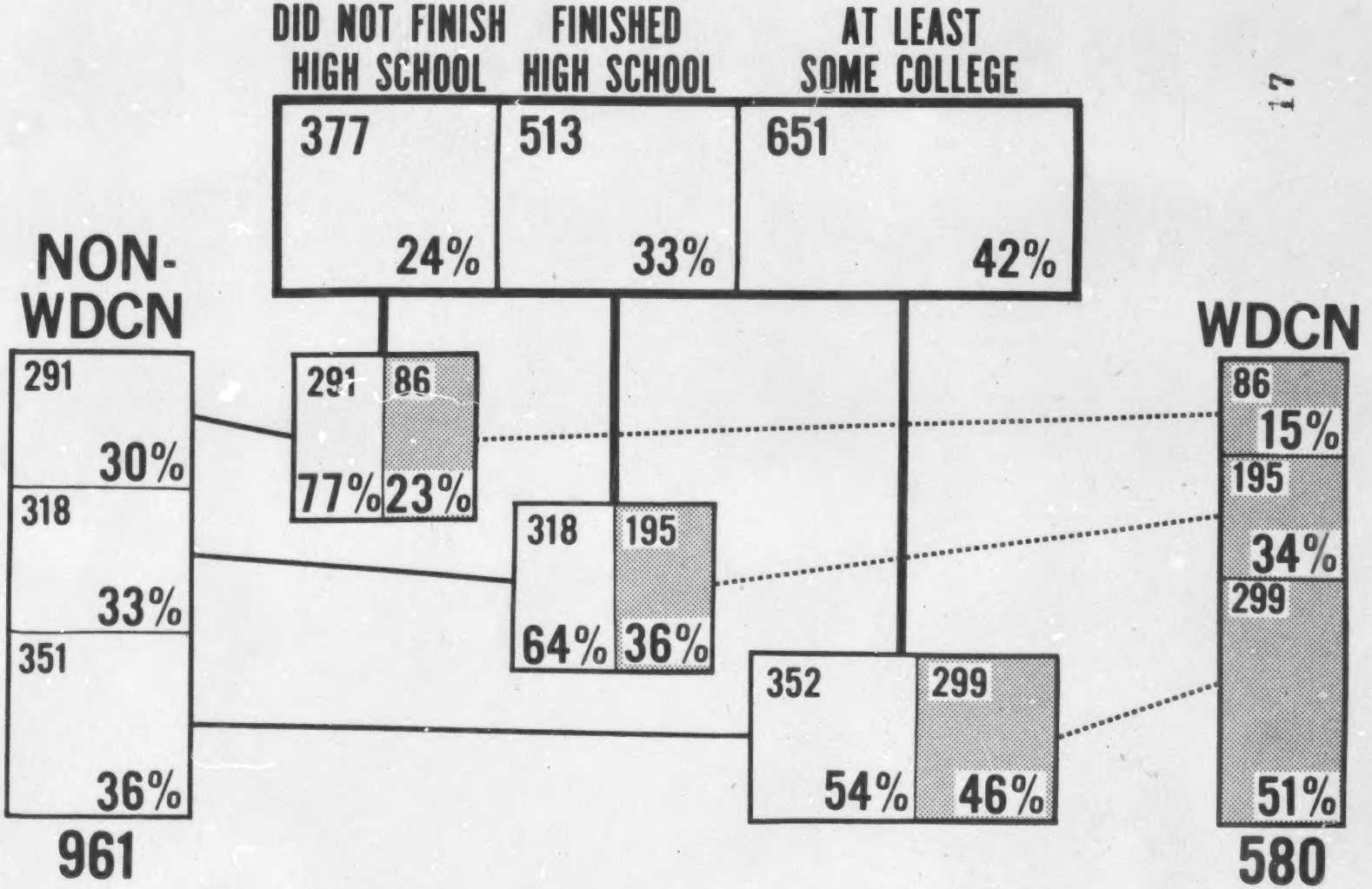
Put together, this means that as a group the WDCN households are younger than homes in which the station is not viewed. A third of the WDCN households are headed by adults in the 26-34 age group, and another third are headed by adults in the 35-49 age group. Thus, three-quarters of the WDCN households are headed by people under 50. By contrast, almost six out of ten of the non-WDCN households are headed by persons over 50.

It should be noted that the bulge in the WDCN age profile represents those years when families are most likely to have young children in the home.

EDUCATION

MALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

N=1541



EDUCATION PROFILE

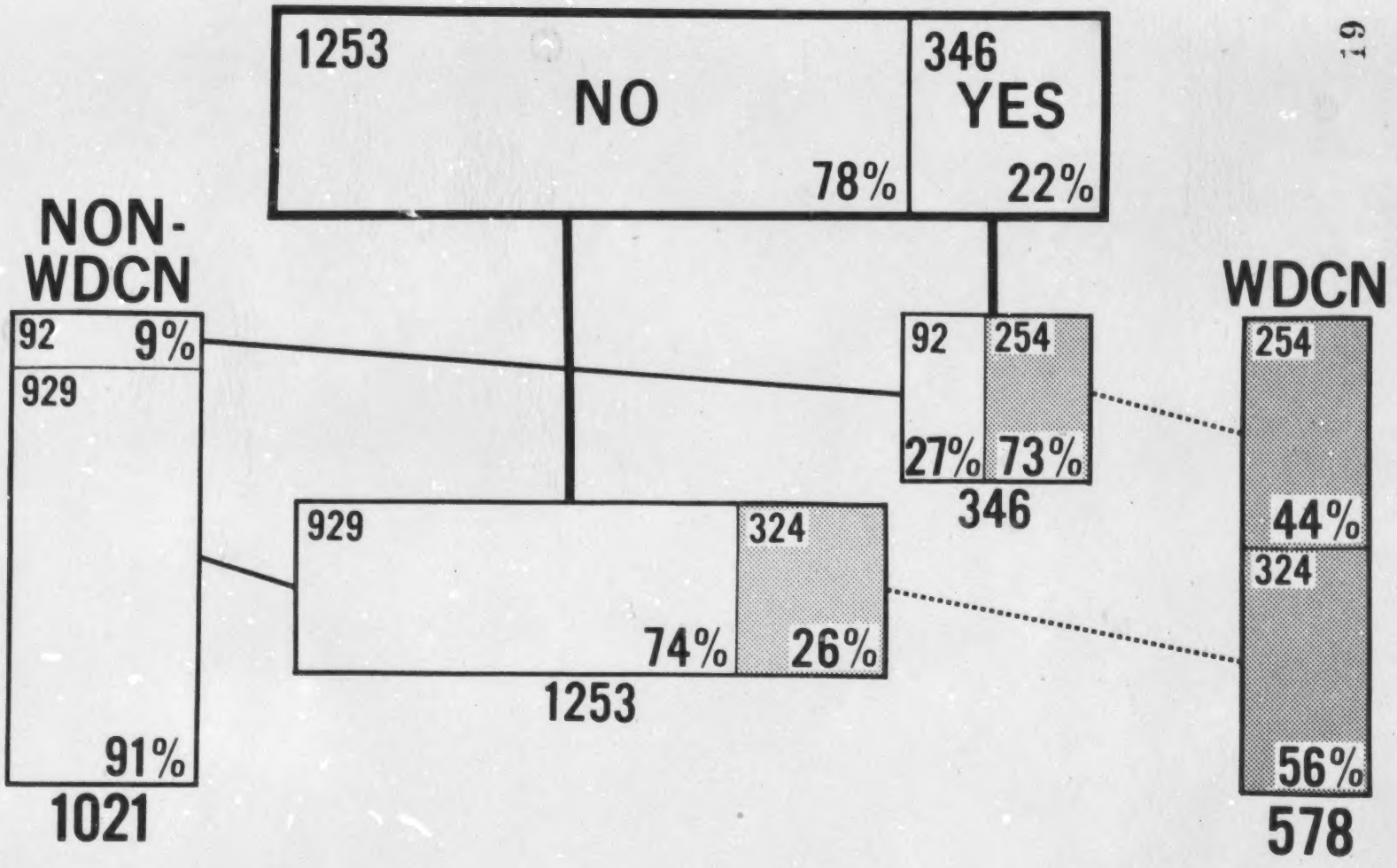
Looking at the three separate education groups, we see a steady increase in the proportion of WDCN viewers as educational level increases. WDCN's reach among those who finished high school is proportionate to its total reach. Among those who went on to college, the reach dramatically increases. But the station reaches fewer than one-fourth of the households where the head did not finish high school--contrasted to almost half of the homes headed by the holder of a college degree.

The impact of this variation in reach produces a WDCN viewer profile in which over half--51%--have at least started college. Among non-viewers, only slightly more than a third had continued their education past high school. Similarly, only 15% of the WDCN household heads did not go to high school, whereas almost a third of the non-viewers stopped their education at this point. It is worth noting, however, that the proportion of WDCN viewers who finished high school is equivalent to that among the non-viewers.

In summary, while it is true that the station attracts a disproportionately larger share of households in which the head has some college education, almost half of its audience consists of homes in which the head went no farther than high school.

HAVE PRE-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

N=1599



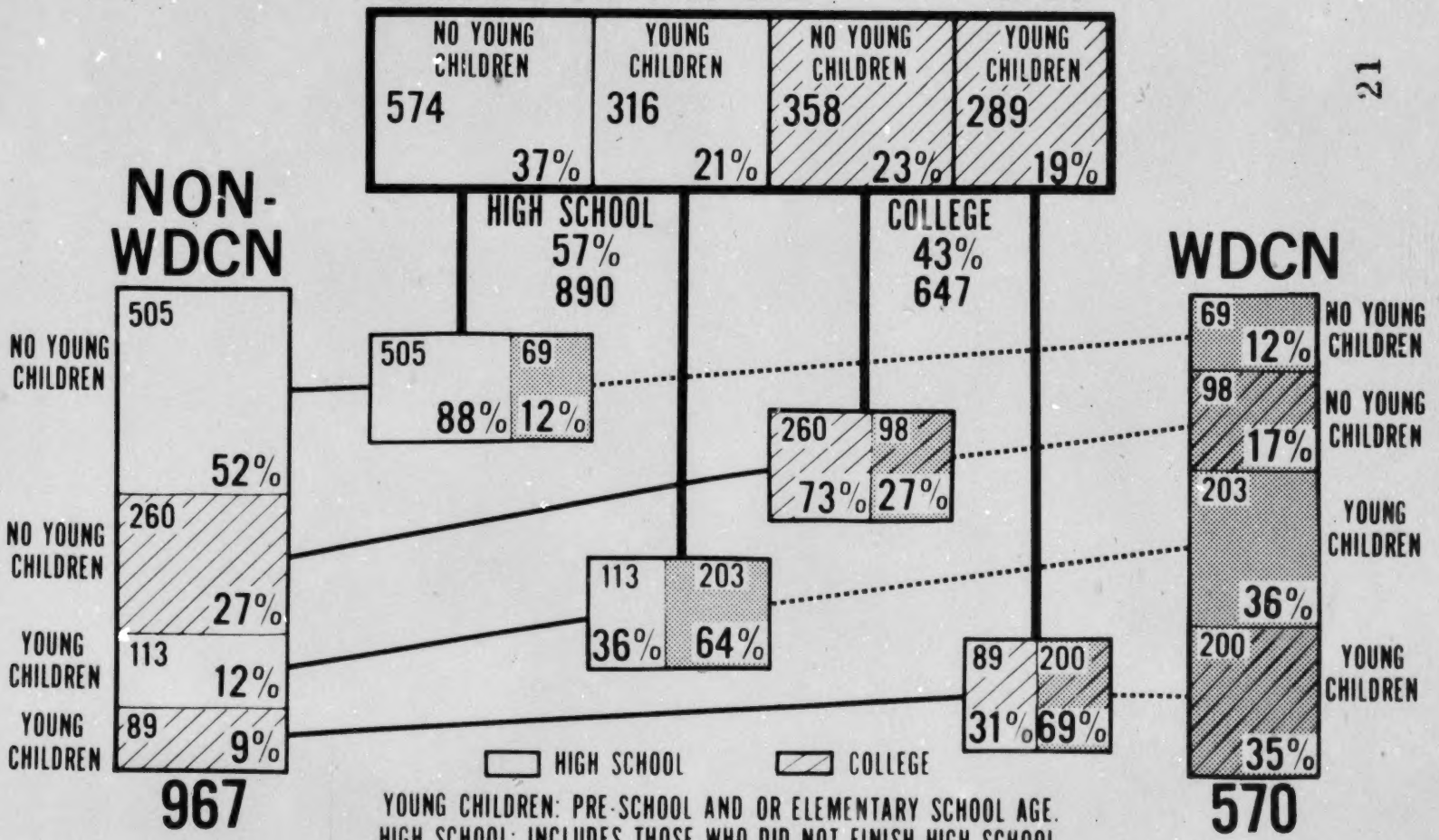
PRESENCE OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Since the debut of "Sesame Street," Public Television's greatest success in terms of audience reach has been provided by its children's programs. The bulge in the WDCN age profile among those age groups most likely to contain young children suggests that this success is shared by WDCN. The accompanying figure illustrates just how dramatically this is true.

Whereas 37% of the total sample qualified as WDCN viewers by naming a WDCN program viewed in the home during the preceding week, 73% of those households containing a pre-school age child met this qualification as a WDCN viewer. Among households without pre-school age children, only 26% qualified as WDCN viewers. The presence of an elementary school child also increased the probability of a household qualifying as a WDCN home, to 42%. This lower degree of success among elementary school age children compared to pre-school age children has been a common finding in most other markets.

WDCN VIEWING RELATED TO EDUCATION AND PRESENCE OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD

TOTAL SAMPLE N=1537



YOUNG CHILDREN: PRE-SCHOOL AND OR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE.
HIGH SCHOOL: INCLUDES THOSE WHO DID NOT FINISH HIGH SCHOOL.
COLLEGE: INCLUDES ALL WHO HAD ANY SCHOOLING BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL.

WDCN VIEWING RELATED TO EDUCATION AND PRESENCE OF YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Traditionally it has been thought that Public Television has an "elite" audience; i.e., its audience is drawn primarily from those with higher educational levels and higher income levels.

The Education Profile showed that even though WDCN does attract more viewers among people who have higher education, its total audience does contain a large number of persons who went no farther than high school. Recent studies in a number of other markets have documented a general shift in the Public Television audience, to the inclusion of more persons from lower socio-economic groups.

The accompanying figure puts together the impact of college education and the presence of young children--pre-school and elementary school age children--in the home.

From the division into WDCN viewers and non-viewers among each of these groups, it is apparent that today the presence of young children in the home is a far more potent factor in predicting the viewing of Public Television than is the educational level of the head of the household. If we look at the boxes for the high school group with young children and the college group with young children, we see that there is relatively little difference in the proportion viewing WDCN. True, viewing is more likely if the head of the house has gone to college, but the more important point is that the vast majority--64%--of the "high school" homes with young children are also in the audience.

But among the boxes representing homes without children, the situation is quite different. Education (and by extension socio-economic status) is a very potent discriminant here. More than twice as many of the homes without young children headed by a college-educated adult view WDCN as those where the adult went no farther than high school.

The message of this figure is that the broadening of the WDCN audience to include more families from low education, blue collar (and minority) families has been achieved by the children's programs. So far it seems to affect only those families with young children in the home. The evidence suggests that the prime time audience continues to be heavily weighted toward the higher socio-economic groups.